

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PALERM 00581 121044Z

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FM AMCONSUL PALERMO

TO AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, IT

SUBJECT: FEASIBILITY STUDY ON MESSINA STRAITS BRIDGE

1. AUGUST 9 GIORNALE DI SICILIA REPORTS THAT THE GROUP RESPONSIBLE FOR FEASIBILITY STUDIES ON THE MESSINA BRIDGE PROJECTS (GRUPPO PONTE DI MESSINA) HAS NOW COMPLETED A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY COVERING SITE, ENGINEERING, TECHNICAL TESTING, AND ECONOMIC IMPACT.

2. ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER, THE FIRM HAS CONCLUDED THAT THE STRAITS BRIDGE SHOULD BE A 3.4 KM. SUSPENSION BRIDGE (REPORTEDLY THE WORLD'S LONGEST). THE GROUP CLAIMS THAT SIMULATION TESTING WITH WINDS OF 250 KM. PER HOUR HAS PROVED THAT THE BRIDGE WOULD RESIST THE STRONG WIND CONDITION PREVAILING OVER THE STRAITS.

3. THE NEWSPAPER REPORT WITH THE REMINDER --HARDLY NECESSARY, GIVEN THE TRACK RECORD FOR THE STRAITS BRIDGE PROJECT-- THAT THE BRIDGE CAN BE REALIZED ONLY IF THERE IS A POLITICAL WILL TO DO SO. ARTICLE ALSO CITES SOLID ATTRACTIONS OF PROJECT FROM VIEWPOINT OF SICILIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND AS COUNTER TO UNEMPLOYMENT NOW PREVALENT IN MEZZOGIORNO. ALTHOUGH GIORNALE DI SICILIA ARTICLE DOES NOT INDICATE CURRENT PROJECT COST ESTIMATE, 1976 COST WAS REPORTED TO BE OVER ONE BILLION DOLLARS.

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4BACKGROUND: THE "GRUPPO PONTE DI MESSINA" WAS INITIALLY ESTABLISHED IN PALERMO IN 1955 AND INCLUDED LARGE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FIRMS, I.E. FIAT, FALCK STEEL, ITALCEMENTI, PIRELLI, MONTECATINI, IRI'S FINSIDER, ETC. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, BRIDGE HAS NOT BEEN VISIBLY ACTIVE FOR SOME TIME. WE UNDERSTAND ITS MAIN OFFICES ARE NOW AT VIA ISONZO 29, ROME (TEL. 858059 AND 861659). THE EMBASSY MAY, THEREFORE, WISH TO FOLLOW-UP DEVELOPMENT REPORTED ABOVE, GIVEN INTEREST EXPRESSED IN

THE PAST BY U.S. FIRMS IN TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION IF AND
WHEN SERIOUS EFFORTS ARE MADE TO BUILD THE BRIDGE. COLLINS

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